1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

commencement of the rains, in April and May, when the rivers begin to rise again and bring the fish into the shallows where they are easily speared among the reeds and weeds. There is very little fishing—by spear in occasional lagoons—after the Nuer have returned to their villages, for these are mainly inland, away from open water, and the streams are too deep and too infested with crocodiles to encourage fishing. Also, the fish are widely distributed by flood water and protected by rank marsh vegetation. Those Nuer whose villages are on the banks of large rivers sometimes fish from dug-out canoes (Plate IX) with long harpoons, but the Nuer possess very few good canoes —and these they have exchanged or stolen from the Anuak—for they have neither the wood nor the skill to make more than crudely burnt-out vessels of palm and sycamore.

Nuer are fine spearsmen but, otherwise, not very ingenious fishermen. Except for occasional fish spitted with amazing rapidity from the bows of canoes by harpoons and spears as they jump or rise to the surface, Nuer never see their prey, but either hurl their spears at random into likely spots amid weeds and reeds or set up grasses and withies to indicate the presence of fish. A myth recounts that once upon a time all fish were visible to the human eye but that God later made them invisible in the water. The chief Nuer weapon is the barbed spear, though the harpoon is considerably used. When fishing in shallows with spears they sometimes strike the water with a ball of twine or the shell of a giant snail attached to a stick (Fig. 10) to attract the fish. Fish are eaten roasted or boiled.

VI

Nuerland is also very rich in game, though Nuer do not exploit this source of food extensively. There are vast herds of tiang and cob; other antelopes are plentiful; and buffalo, elephant, and hippopotami abound. Nuer eat all animals except carnivora, monkeys, some of the smaller rodents, and zebra, and they kill the last for its skin and tail in the south of Lou country, where it roams in the dry season. Lions abound, especially to the west of the Nile, and are a serious menace to the herds, but Nuer only kill them and leopards, the skins of which are worn by chiefs, if they attack cattle in kraals or grazing grounds, as

8:Howell E. G-5 (1942-1944)1954
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

685 important items in the subsistence economy of the people. Their illicit removal by a stranger would again be *wuan*—'theft'.

In analysing some of the customary scales of compensation for misappropriation, it is apparent that in many cases the damages were out of all proportion to the wrong. As in the case of hurt, the compensation was directly proportionate to the suffering of the persons concerned. As has been explained in the introduction, the likelihood of such compensation being paid depended largely on the relationship of the persons involved and the social cohesion of the community in which they dwelt. It is also probable that all these scales of customary compensation date right back to a period of Nuer history when the people lived in more closely-knit groups and before the major processes of expansion began; that is, before they occupied huge tracts of country and absorbed large numbers of Dinka in doing so.

Those material possessions for which compensation (*cut*) was demanded included fish-spears, hoes, and axes—all articles made of iron. The scales of compensation differed considerably from tribe to tribe. The Gaawar, for instance, say that six head of cattle would be demanded for the theft of a fish-spear. Lak Nuer say that one cow was sufficient. The probable reason for this disparity was that compensation was conditioned locally by the relative difficulty of obtaining those articles, and also by the number of cattle paid for them in the first instance. The Gaawar, remotely situated from the trade channels through which iron wares came, could only obtain them from the Anuak to the east or through the Atuot Dinka to the west. In Lak country a cow would purchase a bundle of these things but in Gaawar the cost was much higher.

Again, we find that not only were these articles initially purchased with cattle but all had very considerable value in the subsistence economy of the Nuer. The loss of a fish-spear might cause great hardship because Nuer are often compelled to rely on fish as a major item in their diet, especially when grain is short. Hoes were essential [501] for agricultural processes. Canoes, for which a high rate of compensation was also demanded, were of considerable economic importance not only for fishing, but for swimming cattle across rivers in the course of seasonal migrations. Canoes, however, may have had a trade value nearly equal to the compensation, for suitable timber is rare in Nuerland even today.[1]

It is therefore possible that in these traditional scales of compensation for the loss of certain possessions, there are the germs of deterrent and punitive concepts, but it is more likely that they still fall within the category of private law. There was certainly no organized political

[439] [1] Canoes have a high value. Those imported from Anuak, Shilluk or the south and west are worth several head of cattle. Canoes made of doleib palm trunks which are available locally are comparatively cheap and are usually sold for cash.

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

465 Many Nuer find work near the Arab settlements, or at the mission. But the work that they do at these places is different from what they have done in their tribal life. Wages for a man who works—or should work, but often does not—six hours a day range from fifty piastres to £1 per month, plus five piastres additional each week for food. This is the wage given at one mission. (The wages given are approximately equivalent to $2.50 to $5 per month, plus 25 cents. per week for food.) Wages are based upon the kind of work done. Those working for the Arabs near this same mission do not get as much. Girls who work in the Arab homes frequently get gifts of food.

Some boys receive higher wages than this for special kinds of work which they have been trained to do.

463 In one mission some boys have learned to do quite accurate work on the multigraph, others have developed into good teachers, showing remarkable ability, while a few have shown that they have talent which could be used in public speaking or preaching.

Some of the houseboys have developed into splendid cooks, being able to read a menu written in Nuer and prepare the meal desired without help. A number also can bake bread.

The District Commissioners use interpreters who can write, and are finding more use for boys who have had some school training.

501 Occasionally some Nuer fell a tree, cutting the trunk to the length required for a canoe. Then they will hollow it out and make a canoe of it.

000 All this goes to prove that the Nuer has latent powers which are capable of accomplishing much if rightly developed. It must be admitted that there are Nuer—or at least one—whose mind periodically turns toward